

WELLINGTON (SOMERSET)
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL,

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR 1906.

BY DR. J. MEREDITH,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

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By DR. J. MEREDITH,

Medical Officer of Health.

To the Chairman of the Council of the Wellington
(Somerset) Urban Sanitary District)

16th February, 1907.

SIR,

I have the honour to submit my annual report respecting the sanitary condition and health of the inhabitants of the Urban Sanitary District of Wellington, Somerset, for the year 1906.

Population.—Population census 1891—6,808 ; census 1901—7,283 ; estimated on the 30th of June, 1906—7565. The number of inhabited houses in the area is 1703 ; averaging number of persons per house, 4·4.

Geology.—The geology of the town and district, as supplied by Mr. W. A. E. Usher, F.G.S., was given in a former report.

Occupation.—There has been no particular change in the character of the industrial occupations during the year, which are woollen factories, agricultural, brick-making, mattress making, and the usual employments connected with trades and shops.

Water Supply. — The water supply of the district during the year has proved sufficient and the quality good. The Sanitary Inspector informs me that 42 defects have been notified in connection with water fittings, some of which were in connection with the flushing apparatus of latrines. Notices were served in the regular manner and the necessary repairs were carried out. Special attention, owing to illness, had to be called to the quality of the water supplied from a well in the rural part of the district, which was found dangerously polluted by sewage. Supply from this source was at once discontinued and is not to be resorted to until the matter is rectified. The town water was supplied to eleven additional houses during the year.

Sewage Works.—During the past year all the new sewers have been completed and good progress made with the disposal works. The structural part is near completion. The delay is due to the difficulty experienced in obtaining medium for the filtering beds. This applies to the duplicate works. One set of beds and tanks was completed months ago and has been in work since, and the result is good. The effluent to say the least must be considered satisfactory.

Scavenging.—The street sweeping, watering, and general scavenging have been carried on with regularity, and much rubbish as usual has been carted away and disposed of.

Inspections.—The Sanitary Inspector and I have, either together or singly, systematically inspected the district and attended to all matters brought to our notice, as well as to such things that come under our own observations. Sixteen defects in connection with house drains and latrines were satisfactorily dealt with. Among these, one nuisance deserves notice. Complaint was made of an annoying nuisance issuing, as believed, from a ventilating pipe near a dwelling, but after close examination it was found that the offensive air came through what may be termed the keyhole of the covering over a sewer man-hole placed a few yards from the house. The plugging of the hole resulted in the abatement of the smell.

A serious nuisance was experienced in a house in one of the main streets, caused by sewer gas (as was discovered by smoke test) escaping from faulty house drains and imperfect joints.

Bakers.—Bakers' business places were inspected by us. The results were satisfactory. Due attention to cleanliness was paid by all, except in one case where the baker kept pigeons in the loft over his bakehouse, but these were speedily removed after it was pointed out to him that in that place they must be deemed a cause of nuisance.

Slaughter Houses.—The slaughter houses were also inspected, but we only discovered two instances where special notices were necessary. The cause of complaint was soon rectified in both instances.

Pigs.— Three cases of nuisances arising from pig keeping were dealt with and duly disposed of after notice from the Council, and so were a few cases which had come under notice of the accumulation of an excessive quantity of manure in circumscribed places.

Cowsheds and Dairies.—There are 15 cowsheds and 17 dairies registered in the district. These have been regularly inspected by the Sanitary Inspector and notices respecting whitewashing etc., were issued from time to time. The premises generally are kept in a cleanly condition. The cowsheds are not in use for more than about three months in the year, the cows living out in the fields.

Schools.—The different Elementary Schools were frequently visited during the year, and special attention paid to the sanitary state of the premises and the condition of the pupils. In a few instances it was deemed necessary to send special request to parents to pay more attention to the appearance of their children, before sending them to school, and not to send them in a dirty untidy state. There is decided improvement in this respect of late years. At one school the ventilation of the infants room was found to be inadequate, and special attention of the school authority was called to this by the Council; but as yet the desired improvement has not been effected.

Factories and Workshops.—The factories and workshops of the district were visited during the year, but nothing was noticed demanding especial attention, beyond that in one instance the work-room was too small for the number of hands employed, but since then this has been enlarged. Towards the end of the year a communication was received from the Home Office requesting a report on the condition of the outworkers. As I have already informed the Urban Council, I received from the Clerk the names and addresses of 58 persons who do out-work. The houses were all inspected and the workers seen, except two or three who were not in at the time. I took notice of the state of the houses or rooms, as well as of the character of the work carried on in them. The premises in every instance were clean and in

a satisfactory state. In a great number of cases the kitchens were used for "winding," "mending," and such like employment after the men had gone to their work and the children to school. The workers receive their material direct from the manufacturers without any intermediary, and take the work back in the same way. There is no instance of "sweating" or "farming." The different employments are needleworks, such as—tailoring, hemming, mattress covering, puttee sewing, winding, picking waste, etc., most of the work being done for the woollen manufacturers.

Infectious Diseases.—Six notifications of infectious diseases were received during the year, all in the month of October. Two of them were of Diphtheria and four of Scarlet Fever. The first cases were reported on the 8th October from the same house which was visited at once. The cases were of a very mild character at the time of inspection and they soon recovered. Nothing was found on the premises concerned calculated to give rise to the disease. No other cases occurred. The Scarlet Fever cases were notified on the 8th and 10th and 13th of the same month. There was no connection between them and the diphtheritic ones. The scarlet fever broke out in a private school in the town at the beginning of October soon after the school had resumed work after the holidays. Full report of the outbreak was presented to the Urban Council at their meeting on the 1st of November. The fever was imported into the school, but the manner in which it was brought has not been conclusively ascertained. The school was closed for a while for day scholars and every sanitary precaution taken to safe-guard the pupils and others; and successfully so, as the illness did not spread. Nearly all the boarders and teachers elected to remain at the school during the time. It might be intimated that two children belonging to the same school and living in the Rural Sanitary District suffered from the illness, but these will be reported upon by the Rural Sanitary Medical Officer. No case of infectious illness occurred in the district for a year, until October last, and there has not been any notification since. No fatal case of infectious disease took place in 1905, but one of the scarlet fever cases just referred to, and living in the town, ended fatally owing to complications.

Births.—The number of births in the district during 1906 was unusually low. Only 141 were registered, equal to 18·63 per thousand people. There were nine deaths during the year of children under one year of age, equal to 65.25 per thousand births, a higher proportion than the year before owing to the lesser number of births. There were 136 legitimate births and 5 illegitimate. Out of the nine deaths under one year, six were these of legitimate and three of illegitimate children. 3·5 per cent. of the births were illegitimate, pointing to a creditable state of society compared to some other districts in the kingdom.

Deaths.—As already stated, 91 deaths occurred in the district during 1906. Two were due to epidemic influenza, one to scarlet fever, one to whooping cough, and one death was certified as being due to alcoholism. The causes of death among the remaining 86 call for no special observation. Seventeen persons died at the Union Workhouse and Cottage Hospital, and there were 10 deaths of persons who were strictly non-residents. One has to mention this with a certain amount of reservation, because we have no information which can be considered authentic respecting the deaths of persons belonging to Wellington who have died elsewhere.

Rainfall.—The rainfall of the district amounted to 28 inches during the year and was $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches below average. In 1905 it was $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the average.

Vagrants.—3,455 vagrants availed themselves of the Union Casual Ward during last year—3,234 men, 163 women and 58 children. They have not been the means of importing any infectious illness. The same course has been followed with regard to Sanitary Inspector's report as in former years.

JOHN MEREDITH, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

